



## Questions & Answers

# Water System Capacity

### What is water system capacity?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines water system capacity as:

“...a process through which a water system plans for and implements action to ensure that the system can meet both its immediate and its long-term challenges.”

The three categories of water system capacity are:

**Technical:** The physical system which includes source, treatment, storage, and distribution, plus the ability of water system personnel to adequately operate and maintain the system.

**Managerial:** The ability of the water system’s manager to conduct necessary activities such as staffing, planning, decision-making, maintaining accountability, and interacting with customers and regulatory agencies.

**Financial:** The ability to generate sufficient revenue, maintain credit worthiness, and manage funds through budgeting, accounting, and other methods of fiscal control.

### What are the benefits for water systems that attain full capacity?

- Systems are better able to provide safe and reliable drinking water and meet the requirements of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA).
- They will likely be issued a green operating permit and can expand/develop until reaching their connection limit.
- Systems benefiting from the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) must demonstrate that they meet capacity requirements or will achieve capacity through their proposed project in order to qualify for DWSRF loans.

### What do full capacity water systems look like?

Water systems meeting the following conditions are considered to have full capacity. These systems:

- Have a water system plan or a small water system management program in place.
- Meet the certified water works operator requirements.
- Operate within the approved number of connections.
- Comply with requirements for microbial and chemical monitoring.
- Are in substantial compliance with all drinking water regulations and not operating under a health order or department order.



HELPING TO ENSURE SAFE AND RELIABLE DRINKING WATER

## What can you do to get your water system operating at full capacity?

Water systems can use capacity development as a comprehensive tool to help your water system achieve capacity. Systems can also seek out and take advantage of the assistance offered by the Office of Drinking Water as part of “your” capacity development strategy. For example:

### ***Apply for Capital Improvement Funding through the DWSRF Loan Program***

*Over \$180 million has been committed to help systems achieve or maintain capacity through low interest loans from the DWSRF program. Program information is online at [http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/our\\_main\\_pages/dwsrf.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/our_main_pages/dwsrf.htm)*

### ***Attend Relevant Training***

Proper training is important to developing capacity. The Office of Drinking Water is committed to providing training to public water system operators and owners. We provide the following capacity-related training:

- Monitoring and compliance.
- New and existing drinking water rules and regulations.
- Management practices.
- New treatment technologies.
- Available funding sources.
- Drinking water programs like sanitary surveys, cross connection control, operator certification requirements, and wellhead protection.

Our training calendar is online at [http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/our\\_main\\_pages/training.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/our_main_pages/training.htm)

### ***Seek out technical assistance offered by the Office of Drinking Water***

Staff is available to:

- Explain the federal SDWA and State Board of Health regulations to purveyors as well as lay people.
- Discuss alternatives and follow up on various contamination events such as repeat samples, flushing, public notification and disinfection.
- Discuss and identify sources of various loans and grants to help improve water systems.
- Explain options of merging with another water system, interties, and restructuring.

Regional office staff contacts are available at [http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/staff\\_lists/dwnames.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/staff_lists/dwnames.htm)

## What is the Office of Drinking Water’s capacity strategy?

EPA requires states to develop capacity strategies to help drinking water systems improve their finances, management, infrastructure, and operations so they can provide safe drinking water consistently, reliably, and cost-effectively. The capacity development provisions allow states a lot of flexibility in development of their strategy. Links to two related publications are online at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/Programs/capacity.htm>

## For More Information

For general capacity-related questions, please contact your regional office:

Eastern Regional Office	(509) 456-3115
Northwest Regional Office	(253) 395-6750
Southwest Regional Office	(509) 664-0768

For EPA information relating to capacity: <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/smallsys.html>

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